TWO DISCOURSES;

I. On *Habitual Devotion*,

II. On the Duty of *not living to Ourſelves*;

Both Preached to Aſſemblies of Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters, and publiſhed at their Requeſt.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.LD. F.R.S.

AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND. THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT. AND THE SECOND IS LIKE UNTO IT, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

MATT. xxii, 37, &c.

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THE

PREFACE.

THE former of theſe diſcourſes I have been induced to publiſh by the requeſt of the body of Diſſenting Miniſters who aſſemble annually at Dudley in Staffordſhire, before whom the greater part of it was delivered on Tueſday the 21ſt of May laſt. The latter was preached before the aſſembly of miniſters of the counties of Lancaſter and Cheſter, met at Mancheſter, May 16th, 1764, to carry into execution a ſcheme for the relief of their widows and children. But though it was printed at their requeſt, it was not generally publiſhed; as only a ſmall edition was printed, and ſold in that neighbourhood. Several of my friends having expreſſed their wiſhes to ſee it made more public, I have thought proper to print them together, eſpecially as the ſubjects of them have a conſiderable relation to each other; the one recommending a proper diſpoſition of mind with reſpect to God, and the other that which reſpects men. In both of them, alſo,

I have availed myſelf of Dr. Hartley's theory of the human affections, the excellence of which is, that it not only explains, with wonderful ſimplicity, many phenomena of the mind, which are altogether inexplicable on other principles, but alſo leads to a variety of practical applications, and thoſe of the moſt valuable kind. Of this I have given ſeveral ſpecimens in my *Obſervations on Education*, and others of my publications.

My apology for introducing any thing of this nature into theſe diſcourſes is, that neither of them was compoſed for a common audience. Beſides, the more abſtruſe parts of them are of ſuch a nature, as to be pretty eaſily intelligible to perſons of reflection, though they ſhould have no knowledge of that particular theory. For the general doctrine of the *aſſociation of ideas* is known to all perſons of a liberal education. Whenever I have delivered theſe diſcourſes before a common audience, I have omitted whatever I thought would not be readily underſtood by them, and ſuch paſſages (which however are not very many) may now be paſſed over, without much difficulty or inconvenience,

venience, by thoſe perſons for whoſe uſe they are not calculated.

To the former of theſe diſcourſes the public are already under conſiderable obligations, though they have been ignorant of it; as it was the occaſion of that excellent poem of Mrs. Barbauld, intitled *An Addreſs to the Deity*, which was compoſed immediately after the firſt delivery of it, before an aſſembly of miniſters at Wakefield in Yorkſhire, in the year 1767. Were I to inform my readers how ſoon that poem appeared after the delivery of the diſcourſe, it would add much to their idea of the powers of the writer. I could alſo make the ſame obſervation with reſpect to ſeveral other pieces, and ſome of them the moſt admired in that collection.

If my theological publications have been more of a *ſpeculative* than of a *practical* nature, it is merely becauſe circumſtances have led me to it, and by no means becauſe the former are more pleaſing to me. I hope I ſhall always conſider ſpeculation as ſubſervient to practice. The moſt exact knowledge of truth, and the greateſt zeal for it,

will avail nothing without the practice of thoſe virtues which the moſt uninſtructed of mankind perfectly underſtand. Nay the more knowledge we have of the chriſtian religion, of the general plan and object of it, the more inexcuſable ſhall we be, if we do not, in the firſt place, take care to impreſs our hearts with that *love of God*, and that unreſerved devotedneſs to his will, which our Saviour calls *the firſt and greateſt of all the commandments*, and alſo with that diſintereſted good will to our fellow creatures, which he calls the *ſecond great commandment, and like unto it.*

He was himſelf equally exemplary with reſpect to them both. And it is in vain for us to pretend to be *chriſtians*, if we do not ſtudy to reſemble him (whom alone we are to acknowledge in the character of Lord and maſter) in the diſpoſition of our minds, and in the conduct of our lives. May we all be ſo attentive to diſcharge our proper duty, and to improve the talents with which we are ſeverally intruſted, that when, according to his promiſe, *he ſhall return, and take an account of his ſervants, we may be found without ſpot and blameleſs.*

The

The world in which we live, with all the influences to which we are ſubject, may be equally our friend or our enemy, according to the uſe we make of it. It is wonderfully adapted, by the exerciſe it gives to our faculties, and to our paſſions and affections, to *eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, and ſettle us* in the habit and practice of all virtue, and to raiſe us to a pitch of excellence to which Adam in paradiſe could never have attained. But then it is equally poſſible that, by ſloth and indulgence, we may debaſe our natures to a degree equally wonderful. The knowledge and belief of chriſtianity itſelf, as well as every other advantage of which we are poſſeſſed, is alſo capable either of promoting the moral perfection of our natures, and our fitneſs for immortal happineſs, or of making us the proper objects of a greater condemnation than that of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement.

It behoves us then to conſider our ſituation and all our privileges, very attentively, that we may make the beſt uſe of them. It is not in our option to be in any other circumſtances than thoſe in which our maker has placed us. It will

will alſo avail us nothing to *hide any talent in a napkin.* As we have received it, we muſt give an account of the uſe we make of it.

We are likewiſe ignorant of the time when this account will be called for; and great and ſerious as the buſineſs of life is, the time allowed for the diſpatch of it is both ſhort, and uncertain. But, though ſhort, it is ſufficient for the purpoſe of it, if it be rightly improved; and then the uncertainty of its duration is a circumſtance that does not need to give us any concern. *At ſuch an hour as we think not the judge may come,* but then, *happy is that ſervant whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching.*

I ſhall take the liberty to cloſe this preface with an extract of what is more peculiarly practical, and therefore more immediately ſuiting my preſent purpoſe, from Mrs. Barbauld's poem above-mentioned.

If the ſoft hand of winning pleaſure leads,
By living waters, and thro' flow'ry meads;
When all is ſmiling, tranquil, and ſerene,
And vernal beauty paints the flatt'ring ſcene;

Oh

Oh teach me to elude each latent ſnare,
And whiſper to my ſliding heart, BEWARE.
With candour let me hear the ſyren's voice,
And doubtful, with a trembling heart, rejoice.

If friendleſs, in a vale of tears, I ſtray,
Where briars wound, and thorns perplex my way
Still let my ſteady ſoul thy goodneſs ſee,
And with ſtrong confidence lay hold on thee.
With equal joy my various lot receive,
Reſign'd to die, or reſolute to live;
Prepar'd to kiſs the ſcepter, or the rod,
While God is ſeen in all, and all in God.

With thee in ſhady ſolitudes I walk,
With thee in buſy crowded cities talk;
In every creature own thy forming pow'r,
In each event thy providence adore.
Thy hopes ſhall animate my drooping ſoul,
Thy precepts guide me, and thy fear controul.
Thus ſhall I reſt, unmov'd by all alarms,
Secure within the temple of thy arms;
From anxious cares, from gloomy terrors free,
And feel myſelf omnipotent in thee.

Then when the laſt, the cloſing hour draws nigh,
And earth recedes before my ſwimming eye;
Teach me to quit this tranſitory ſcene,
With decent triumph, and a look ſerene;
Teach me to fix my ardent hopes on high,
And, having liv'd to thee, in thee to die.

A

DISCOURSE

ON

HABITUAL DEVOTION.

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not ſeek after God. God is not in all his thoughts.

PSALM 10. 4.

GOD, my chriſtian brethren, is a being with whom we all of us have to do, and the relation we ſtand in to him is the moſt important of all our relations. Our connections with other beings, and other things, are ſlight, and tranſient, in compariſon with this. God is our *maker*, our conſtant *preſerver* and *benefactor*, our moral *governour*, and our final *judge*. He is preſent with us wherever we are; the ſecrets of all hearts are conſtantly known to him, and *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. Here, then, is a ſituation, in

 which

which we find ourſelves, that demands our cloſeſt attention. The conſideration is, in the higheſt degree, intereſting and alarming; knowing how abſolutely dependent we are upon God, that *in him we live and move and have our being*; and knowing, alſo, that by vice and folly we have rendered ourſelves juſtly obnoxious to his diſpleaſure.

Now, to think, and to act, in a manner correſponding to this our neceſſary intercourſe with God, certainly requires that we keep up an habitual regard to it: and a total, or very great degree of inattention to it, muſt be highly criminal and dangerous. Accordingly we find in the ſcriptures, that it is characteriſtic of a good man, that *he ſets the Lord always before him*, and that *he acknowledges God in all his ways*. Whereas it is ſaid of the wicked, in my text, that *God is not in all their thoughts*; and elſewhere, that *the fear of God is not before their eyes*; that *they put the thoughts of God far from them, and will not the knowledge of the moſt high*.

This circumſtance, ſeems to furniſh a pretty good teſt of the ſtate of a man's mind with reſpect to virtue and vice. The moſt abandoned and profligate of mankind are thoſe who live *without God in the world*, entirely thoughtleſs of his Being, perfections, and providence; having

ing their hearts wholly engroſſed with this world and the things of it; by which means thoſe paſſions, which terminate in the enjoyment of them, are inflamed to ſuch a degree, that no other principle can reſtrain their indulgence. Theſe perſons may be called *practical atheiſts*; and the temper of mind they have acquired, often leads them to deny both natural and revealed religion. They ſecretly wiſh, indeed, they cannot but wiſh, there may be no truth in thoſe principles, the apprehenſion of which is apt to give them diſturbance; and hence they give little attention to the evidence that is produced for them, and magnify all the objections they here made to them. And it is well known, that, in a mind ſo ſtrongly biaſſed, the moſt cogent reaſons often amount to nothing, while the moſt trifling cavils paſs for demonſtration. It is the ſame with reſpect to any other ſpeculation, when the mind has got a *bias* in favour of any particular concluſion.

On the other hand, a truly and perfectly good man loves, and therefore cheriſhes the thought of God, his father and his friend; till every production of divine power and ſkill, every inſtance of divine bounty, and every event of divine providence, never fails to ſuggeſt to his mind the idea of the great Author of all things, *the giver of every good and every perfect gift*, and the ſovereign

diſpoſer of all affairs and of all events. Thus he lives, as it were, conſtantly *ſeeing him, who is inviſible.* He ſees God in every thing, and he ſees every thing in God. He *dwells in love*, and thereby *dwells in God, and God in him.* And ſo long as he conſiders himſelf as living in the world which God has made, and partaking of the bounty with which his providence ſupplies him; ſo long as he is intent upon diſcharging his duty, in the ſituation in which, he believes the Divine Being has placed him, and meets with no greater trials and difficulties than, he is perſuaded, his God and father hath appointed for his good, it is almoſt impoſſible that the thought of God ſhould ever be long abſent from his mind. Every thing he ſees or feels will make it recur again and again perpetually. His whole life will be, as it were, one act of devotion; and this ſtate of mind, being highly pleaſurable, and his ſatisfaction having infinite ſources, will be daily encreaſing, ſo as to grow more equable, and more intenſe to all eternity; when it will be *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.*

Theſe are the two extremes of the ſentiments and conduct of men with reſpect to God, and all the varieties of human characters will be found ſomewhere between them

them; ſo that we may be deemed virtuous or vicious, in proportion as we approach to the one or the other.

The more imperfect of the middle claſſes of mankind will have their minds too much engroſſed by this world and the things of it, ſo as to exclude, in a very great degree, the apprehenſion of God, and of their relation to him. Provided, however, that they have had a religious education, theſe thoughts cannot be prevented from recurring from time to time, and producing ſtronger or weaker reſolutions of repentance and amendment; but not having their full influence, and therefore, ſerving rather to diſquiet the mind, conſcious of a want of perfect integrity, they will be apt to be overborne by the ſuperior power of things ſeen and temporal; and the minds of ſuch perſons being in this fluctuating condition, whatever ſucceſs they may have in the world, their lives will contain a great mixture of anxiety and remorſe.

But thoſe whom we may ſtile the more perfect of the middle claſſes of men, though like the former, their minds may be, now and then, carried away by the magic influences of this world; and though they may give too far, and too eagerly, into the purſuit of its pleaſures, riches, and honours,

they will never wholly, or for a long time, loſe ſight of God, and of their duty; and pious ſentiments, recurring with ſuperior force, at intervals, will produce a kind of *religious fervour*, which, rouſing the mind to a greater exertion of its powers, will produce good reſolutions with conſiderable ſtrength and vigour; and thereby break their growing attachment to the world. Theſe fervours, however, will of courſe remit, and other objects will neceſſarily reſume ſome part, at leaſt, of their influence: but if a ſenſe of God and of religion have once taken firm hold of the mind, in the early part of life, there will be reaſon to hope, that an expreſs regard to them will return with greater force, and after ſhorter intervals, perpetually. By this means ſuch ſtrength will be given to the principle of conſcience, that in the fartheſt excurſions they make from the ſtrict path of religion, even while they maintain no expreſs regard to God in their actions, the bare apprehenſion of a thing being *right*, and their *duty*, will, in all conſiderable inſtances, immediately and mechanically determine their minds; ſo that they will never deliberately do any thing which they are convinced is unlawful, and offenſive to God. At moſt, if ever a ſtronger temptation than uſual ſhould induce them to tranſgreſs their known duty, in any of the greater inſtances.

inſtances of it, the ſtate of their minds will be ſuch, as that theſe tranſgreſſions will be followed by the keeneſt compunction and contrition, which will make them leſs liable to commit the ſame offence a ſecond time.

Thus we ſee that thoſe perſons, in whoſe minds there is this prevailing diſpoſition to virtue, will be improved both by the uniform practice of their duty, which neceſſarily ſtrengthens the *habit* of it, and even by occaſional tranſgreſſions, which gives a ſtronger *ſtimulus* to the power of conſcience. But there is great danger, leſt theſe violations of known duty be either ſo great as to produce deſpair, which naturally hardens the mind, or ſo frequent as to beget a habit. Both theſe weaken the power of conſcience. The man then goes backward in religion, and may at laſt, even from this more advanced ſtate of virtue, be brought to *commit all iniquity with greedineſs*. Let *him*, then, *who thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall*; and let all of us, conſcious of the frailty of our natures, be intent upon *working out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*.

An *habitual regard to God* being the moſt effectual means of advancing us from the more imperfect to the more perfect ſtate I

have been deſcribing, I ſhall endeavour to recommend this leading duty to you, by a fuller and more diſtinct enumeration of its happy effects; and I ſhall then ſhew what I apprehend to be the moſt effectual methods of promoting it, and of removing the various obſtructions to it.

1. An habitual regard to God in our actions tends greatly to keep us firm in our adherence to our duty. It has pleaſed divine providence to place man in a ſtate of trial and probation. This world is ſtrictly ſuch. We are ſurrounded with a great variety of objects, adapted to gratify a variety of ſenſes, with which we are furniſhed. The pleaſures they give us are all innocent in moderation, and they engage us in a variety of agreeable and proper purſuits. But our natures are ſuch, that the frequent indulgence of any of our appetites tends to make its demands inordinate, and to beget an habitual propenſity to indulge it; and this proneneſs to the exceſſive indulgence of any of our paſſions enſlaves our minds, and is highly dangerous, and criminal. By this means we too often come to forget God our maker, to injure our fellow creatures of mankind, and to do a ſtill greater, and more irreparable injury to ourſelves, both in mind and body.

body. It has pleaſed Almighty God, therefore, from the concern he had for our good, to forbid theſe immoderate indulgences of the love of pleaſure, riches, and honour, by expreſs *laws*, guarded with the moſt awful ſanctions. Now we are certainly leſs liable to forget theſe laws, and our obligation to obſerve them, when we keep up an habitual regard to our great lawgiver and judge; when we conſider him as always *preſent with us*; when we conſider that *his eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good*; that he *ſees in ſecret*, and will one day *reward openly*. In this manner we ſhall acquire an habitual reverence for God and his laws, which will end in an habitual obedience to them, even without any expreſs regard to their authority. Thus we ſhould certainly be leſs likely to neglect the requeſt of a friend, or the injunction of a maſter, if we could always keep in mind the remembrance of our friend, or maſter; and a conſtant attention to them would certainly give us a habit of pleaſing them in all things.

2. An habitual regard to God promotes an uniform chearfulneſs of mind; it tends to diſſipate anxiety, or melancholy, and may even, in ſome caſes, prevent madneſs. Without a regard to God, as the maker and governor

of

of all things, this world affords but a gloomy and uncomfortable proſpect. Without this, we ſee no great *end* for which we have to live, we have no great or animating *object* to purſue; and whatever ſchemes we may be carrying on, our views are bounded by a very ſhort and narrow ſpace. To an atheiſt, therefore, every thing muſt appear little, dark, and confuſed. And let it be conſidered, that, in proportion as we forget God, and loſe our regard to him, we adopt the ſentiments and views of atheiſts, and ſhut our eyes to the bright and glorious proſpects which religion exhibits to us.

Religion, my brethren, the doctrine of a God, of a providence, and of a future ſtate, opens an immenſe, a glorious, and moſt tranſporting proſpect; and every man, who is humbly conſcious that he conforms to the will of his maker, may enjoy, and rejoice in this proſpect. Conſidering ourſelves as the ſubjects of the moral government of God, we ſee a moſt important ſphere of action in which we have to exert ourſelves, we have the greateſt of all objects ſet before us, *glory, honour, and immortality, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, as the reward of our faithful *perſeverance in well doing*; and we have a boundleſs exiſtence, an eternity in which to purſue and enjoy this reward.

Theſe

Theſe great views and objects, the contemplation of which muſt be habitual to the mind which keeps up an habitual regard to God, cannot fail to diminiſh the luſtre of *the things of time and ſenſe*, which engage our attention here below, and while they leſſen our ſolicitude and anxiety about them, they muſt cure that fretfulneſs, and diſtreſs of mind, which is occaſioned by the diſappointments we meet with in them.

For the ſame reaſon, this habitual regard to God, this life of devotion, which I would recommend, muſt tend in ſome meaſure to prevent that moſt deplorable of all the calamities mankind are ſubject to, I mean *madneſs*. It is well known, that the circumſtance which generally firſt occaſions, or at leaſt greatly contributes to this diſorder, is too cloſe, and too anxious an attention to ſome *ſingle thing*, in which a perſon is greatly intereſted; ſo that, for a long time, he can hardly think of any thing elſe, and particularly, is often prevented from *ſleeping*, by means of it. Thus we frequently ſee, that when perſons are of a ſanguine temper of mind, a ſevere diſappointment of any kind will end in madneſs. Alſo a ſudden tranſport of *joy*, from unexpected ſucceſs, will ſometimes have the ſame effect. But, from the nature of the thing, this violence of either kind, could hardly take place in a truly

truly devout and pious mind, in the mind of a man who conſiders all the events, in which he can be concerned, as appointed by a God infinitely wiſe and good; who, he is perſuaded, hath, in the moſt afflictive providences, the moſt gracious intention to him, and to all mankind; and who, by the moſt proſperous events, means to try his virtue, and to put him upon the moſt difficult of all exerciſes, that of behaving properly in ſuch circumſtances. To a mind rightly diſpoſed, and duly ſeaſoned with a ſenſe of religion, nothing here below will appear to be of ſufficient moment to produce theſe dreadful effects. *We ſhall rejoice, as though we rejoiced not; and weep, as though we wept not, knowing that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away.*

Deep melancholy is often occaſioned, in perſons of a lower tone of ſpirits, by the ſame kind of diſappointments which produce raging madneſs in others. It is the effect of *deſpair*, and could never take place, but when a perſon apprehended, that that which we may call his *all*, that in which he put his chief truſt and confidence, had failed him, and he had no other reſource to fly to. But a truly religious man can never diſpair; becauſe, let what will befall him here below, he knows his chief happineſs is ſafe, being lodged where *neither moth nor ruſt can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break*

break through nor ſteal. In patience, therefore, he will be able at all times to *poſſeſs his own ſoul*, exerciſing a ſteady truſt and confidence in God, *the rock of ages, the ſure reſting place of all generations.*

Melancholy, or deſpondence in a lower degree, what we commonly call *lowneſs of ſpirits*, generally ariſes from a want of ſome object of purſuit, ſufficient to engage the attention, and rouſe a man to the proper exertion of his powers. In this ſituation, he has nothing to do but to think of himſelf, and his own feelings, which never fails to involve him in endleſs anxiety and diſtreſs. But a principle of religion will ever put a man upon a variety of active and vigorous purſuits. No truly pious and good man can be an idle man. He will fully employ all his power of doing good; he will not keep his *talent hid in a napkin*; and, far from complaining that time hangs heavy on his hands, he will rather complain, that he has not time enough for the execution of half his benevolent purpoſes.

3. An habitual regard to God fits a man for the buſineſs of this life, giving a peculiar preſence and intrepidity of mind; and is, therefore, the beſt ſupport in difficult enterprizes of any kind. A man who keeps up an habitual regard to God, who *acknowledges him in all his*

his ways, and lives a life of devotion to him, has a kind of *union with God*; feeling, in ſome meaſure, the ſame ſentiments, and having the ſame views. Hence, being, in the language of the apoſtle, *a fellow worker together with God*, and therefore being confident that God is with him and for him, *he will not fear what man can do unto him*. Moreover, fearing God, and having confidence in him, he is a ſtranger to every other fear. Being ſatisfied that God will work all his pleaſure in him, by him, and for him, he is free from alarm and perturbation, and is not eaſily diſconcerted, ſo as to loſe the poſſeſſion of his own mind. And having this preſence of mind, being conſcious of the integrity of his own heart, confiding in the favour of his maker, and therefore ſenſible that there is nothing of much real value that he can loſe, he will have leiſure to conſider every ſituation in which he finds himſelf, and be able to act with calmneſs and prudence, as circumſtances may require.

Is there, then, any active and difficult ſervice, to which we are ſummoned by the voice of our country, of mankind, and of God, theſe are the men, I mean men of religion and devotion, in whom we can moſt confide. Other men may be rouſed by their paſſions to any pitch of patriotic enthuſiaſm. They may oppoſe the inſidious attempts of corrupt miniſters

miniſters or tyrants, to enſlave their country, or may bravely face a foreign enemy in the field, though they riſk their fortunes, and their lives in the conteſt. But mere worldly minded men, ſtaking their *all* in ſuch enterprizes as theſe, and having little more than a ſenſe of *honour* to ſupport them, may, in ſome critical moment, be ſenſible of the value of what they riſk, and, on that principle prove cowards.

Whereas the man of religion feels the ſame indignation againſt all iniquitous attempts to enſlave himſelf and his country, and if he have the ſame native ardour of mind, he will be rouſed to act with the ſame vigour againſt a tyrant, or an invader; but running no riſk of what is of moſt conſequence to him, he will not be ſo liable to be intimidated; he will be more maſter of himſelf, have greater preſence of mind, and act with greater prudence in time of danger. If he die in the glorious ſtruggle, he dies, not with the gloomy ferocity of the mere man of this world, but with the triumph of a chriſtian, in a conſciouſneſs of having finiſhed his career of virtue in the moſt glorious manner in which he could poſſibly finiſh it, in the ſervice of his country, and of mankind.

Having

Having thus conſidered the important *effects* of an habitual regard to God in all our ways, I come to treat of the moſt proper and effectual methods of promoting this temper of mind.

1. Are you then, my chriſtian brethren, really deſirous to cultivate this habitual devotion. Endeavour, in the firſt place, to diveſt your minds of too great a multiplicity of the cares of this world. The man who lives to God, in the manner in which I have been endeavouring to deſcribe, lives to him principally, and loves and confides in him above all. To be ſolicitous about this world, therefore, as if our chief happineſs conſiſted in it, muſt be incompatible with this devotion. *We cannot ſerve God and Mammon.* If we be *chriſtians*, we ſhould conſider, that the great, and profeſſed object of our religion, is the revelation of a future life, of unſpeakably more importance to us than this tranſitory world, and the periſhable things of it. As chriſtians, we ſhould conſider ourſelves as *citizens of heaven*, and only *ſtrangers and pilgrims here below.* We muſt, therefore, ſee, that, as chriſtians, there is certainly required of us a conſiderable degree of indifference about this world, which was only intended to ſerve us as a paſſage to a better.

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The Divine Being himſelf has made wiſe proviſion for leſſening the cares of this world, by the appointment of one day in ſeven, for the purpoſe of reſt and avocation from labour. Let us then, at leaſt, take the advantage which this day gives us, of *calling off our eyes from beholding vanity*, and of *quickening us in the ways of God.*

This advice I would particularly recommend to thoſe perſons who are engaged in *arts*, *manufactures*, and *commerce*. For, highly beneficial as theſe things are, in a political view, and ſubſervient to the elegant enjoyment of life, they ſeem not to be ſo favourable to religion and devotion, as the buſineſs of *agriculture*; and for this reaſon, therefore, probably, among others, the Divine Being forbad commerce to the people of the Jews, and made the laws he gave them by Moſes, chiefly adapted to a life of huſbandry. The huſbandman is in a ſituation peculiarly favourable to the contemplation of the works of God, and to a ſenſe of his dependence upon him. The rain from heaven, and various circumſtances relating to the weather, &c. on which the goodneſs of his crops depends, he receives as from the hand of God, and is hardly ſenſible of any ſecondary, or more immediate cauſe. If he underſtand any thing of the principles of vegetation, and can ac-

count for a few obvious appearances upon what we call *the laws of nature*; theſe laws he knows to be the expreſs appointment of God; and he cannot help perceiving the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in the appointment; ſo that the objects about which he is daily converſant, are, in their nature, a leſſon of gratitude and praiſe.

Beſides, the employment of the huſbandman being, chiefly, to *bring food out of the earth*, his attention is more confined to the real wants, or at leaſt, the principal conveniences of life; and his mind is not, like that of the curious artiſt and manufacturer, ſo liable to be faſcinated by a taſte for ſuperfluities and the factitious wants of men.

Nor, laſtly, does the buſineſs of huſbandry ſo wholly engroſs a man's thoughts and attention, while he is employed about it, as many of the arts and manufactures, and as commerce neceſſarily does. And it ſhould be a general rule with us, that the more *attention of mind* our employment in life requires, the more careful ſhould we be to draw our thoughts from it, on the *day of reſt*, and at other intervals of time ſet apart for devotional purpoſes. Otherwiſe, a worldly-minded temper, not being checked or controuled by any thing of a contrary

contrary tendency, will neceſſarily get poſſeſſion of our hearts.

2. This brings me to the ſecond advice, which is by no means to omit ſtated times of worſhiping God by prayer, public and private. Every paſſion and affection in our frame is ſtrengthened by the proper and natural expreſſion of it. Thus frequent intercourſe and converſation with thoſe we love promotes friendſhip, and ſo alſo, the intercourſe we keep up with God by prayer, in which we expreſs our reverence and love of him, and our confidence in him, promotes a ſpirit of devotion, and makes it eaſier for the ideas of the Divine Being, and his providence to occur to the mind on other occaſions, when we are not formally praying to him. Beſides, if perſons whoſe thoughts are much employed in the buſineſs of this life, had no time ſet apart for the exerciſes of devotion, they would be in danger of neglecting it entirely; at leaſt, to a degree that would be attended with a great diminution of their virtue and happineſs.

But, in order that the exerciſes of devotion may be the moſt efficacious to promote the true ſpirit, and general habit of it, it is adviſeable, that *prayers* properly ſo called, that is, direct addreſſes to the Divine

Being be ſhort. The ſtrong feelings of reverence, love, and confidence, which ought to animate our devotions, cannot be kept up by ſuch minds as ours through a prayer of conſiderable length: and a tedious languor in prayer is of great diſſervice to the life of religion, as it accuſtoms the mind to think of God with indifference; whereas, it is of the utmoſt conſequence, that the Divine Being always appear to us as an object of the greateſt importance, and engage the whole attention of our ſouls. Except, therefore, in public, where prayers of a greater length are, in a manner, neceſſary, and where the preſence and concurrence of our fellow worſhipers aſſiſt to keep up the fervour of our common devotion, it ſeems more adviſeable, that devotional exerciſes, have intervals of meditation, calculated to impreſs our minds more deeply with the ſentiments we expreſs; and that they be uſed without any ſtrict regard to particular times, places, or poſture of body.

This method of conducting devotional exerciſes, which makes them conſiſt chiefly of meditation upon God and his providence, hath in many caſes ſeveral advantages over a direct addreſs to God, which ſhould peculiarly recommend it to thoſe who are deſirous to cultivate the genuine ſpirit of devotion

votion. Among other advantages, and that not the leaſt, in meditation, the mind is not ſo apt to acquieſce in the mere *work done*, (what the ſchoolmen call the *opus operatum*) as it is in formal prayer, eſpecially when it is made of conſiderable length. So prone, alas! is the mind of man to ſuperſtition, that hardly any thing can be preſcribed to us, as a *means* of virtue, but we immediately acquieſce in it as an *end*; and not only ſo, but the conſequence of a punctilious obſervance of prayer, and other means of religion, is too often made the foundation of a ſpiritual pride, and ſelf-ſufficiency, which is of a moſt alarming nature; being directly oppoſite to that deep humility and ſelf-abaſement, which is ever the predominant diſpoſition of a mind truly devout. The ſentiment correſponding to the language *ſtand by thy ſelf, I am holier than thou, is* not, I am afraid, peculiar to the Phariſaical Jew, or the Romiſh devotee. It infects many proteſtant religioniſts, being generated by ſimilar cauſes. Rather than be liable to this, it is certainly better, far better, even to be leſs regular in our exerciſes of devotion. *God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.*

3. In the courſe of your uſual employment, omit no proper opportunity of turning your thoughts towards God. Habitually regard him as the *ultimate cauſe*, and *proper author* of every thing you ſee, and the diſpoſer of all events that reſpect yourſelves or others. This will not fail to make the idea of God occur familiarly to your mind, and influence your whole conduct.

It is to be regretted, that the taſte and cuſtom of this country is ſuch, that a perſon of a devotional turn of mind cannot indulge himſelf in the natural expreſſion of it, even upon the moſt proper and juſt occaſions, without expoſing himſelf to the particular notice, if not the ridicule of the generality of thoſe who may be preſent; whereas could we decently, and ſeriouſly expreſs our gratitude to God, upon every agreeable occurrence, and our reſignation and ſubmiſſion to his will upon every calamitous event of life, it would tend greatly to ſtrengthen the habit of *acknowledging God in all our ways*, and promote the ſpirit of devotion.

In no other country, I believe, whatever, neither among the Roman catholicks, nor Mahometans, have people, even the moſt faſhionable and polite, any idea of being aſhamed of their religion. On the contrary, they are rather oſtentatious of it, and there-

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fore they ſeem to have more than they are really poſſeſſed of: and this is the caſe with ſome, both of the eſtabliſhed church, and among the Diſſenters in England. But, unfortunately, this outward ſhew of religion was carried to ſuch a length, about a century ago, in this country, and was ſometimes made to ſubſerve ſuch infamous purpoſes, that, I believe, the greater part of the moſt ſincerely pious, and humble chriſtians, now make a point of expoſing to the world, as little of the religion they have as poſſible; ſo that they are really poſſeſſed of much more than they ſeem to have. This I truſt is the caſe with great numbers, who are little ſuſpected of being particularly religious, becauſe they are ſeldom, or never heard to talk about it. And, upon the whole, while things are ſo unfortunately circumſtanced, I think this extreme preferable to the other; as, of all things, the reproach of hypocriſy ought to be avoided with the utmoſt care.

4. In a more eſpecial manner, never fail to have recourſe to God upon every occaſion of ſtrong emotion of mind, whether it be of a pleaſurable, or of a painful nature. When your mind is labouring under diſtreſſing doubts, and great anxiety, or when you are any way embarraſſed in the conduct of

your affairs, fly to God, as your friend and father, your counſellor and your guide. In a ſincere and earneſt endeavour to diſcharge your duty, and to act the upright and honourable part, *commit your way unto him*, repoſe yourſelves upon his providence, confiding in his care to overrule every thing for the beſt, and you will find a great, and almoſt inſtantaneous relief. Your perturbation of mind will ſubſide, as by a charm, and the ſtorm will become a ſettled calm. Tumultuous and exceſſive joy will alſo be moderated by this means; and thus all your emotions will be rendered more equable, more pleaſurable, and more laſting. And this is produced not by any ſupernatural agency of God on the mind, but is the natural effect of confidence in a being of perfect wiſdom and goodneſs.

But the capital advantage you will derive from this practice will be, that the idea of God, being, by this means, aſſociated with all the ſtrongeſt emotions of your mind, your whole ſtock of devotional ſentiments and feelings will be increaſed. All thoſe ſtrong emotions, now ſeparately indiſtinguiſhable, will coaleſce with the idea of God, and make part of the complex train of images ſuggeſted by the term, ſo that you will afterwards think of God oftener, and with more

ſervour than before; and the thought of him will have greater influence with you than ever.

5. In order to cultivate the ſpirit of habitual devotion, labour to free your minds from all conſciouſneſs of guilt, and ſelf reproach, by means of a conſtant attention to the upright and ſteady diſcharge of the whole of your duty. In conſequence of neglecting our duty, we become backwards, as we may ſay, to make our appearance before God. We cannot look up to him with full confidence of his favour and bleſſing; and are, therefore, too apt to omit devotion entirely. Beſides, we always feel an averſion to the exerciſe of *ſelf-abaſement* and *contrition*, which are all the ſentiments that we can with propriety indulge in thoſe circumſtances; eſpecially as we have a ſecret ſuſpicion, that we ſhall, for ſome time at leaſt, go on to live as we have done; ſo that rather than confeſs our ſins, and continue to live in them, we chuſe not to make confeſſion at all.

But this, my brethren, is egregious trifling, and highly dangerous. Thus, at beſt, all improvement is at a ſtand with us, if we be not going fatally backwards in our moral ſtate. If this be our character, as I believe it is, more or leſs, that of a very great number even of thoſe

thoſe I have called the better ſort of the middle claſſes of men, let us in time, and in good earneſt, caſt off all our ſins, negligencies, and follies by true repentance. Let us draw near, and *acquaint ourſelves with God*, that we may be at peace. You can have no true peace, aſſurance, or ſatisfaction of mind in this life without it: for, if you be of the claſs I am now referring to, it is too late for you to have a perfect enjoyment of a life of ſin and diſſipation. And between that kind of peace, or rather *ſtupor*, which thoſe who are abandoned to wickedneſs, thoſe who are wholly addicted to this world, and make it their ſole end (or thoſe who are groſsly ignorant of religion) enjoy, and that *inward peace and ſatisfaction* which accompanies the faithful and earneſt diſcharge of every known duty, there is no ſufficient medium. You may go about ſeeking reſt, in this wide ſpace, while your hearts are divided between God and the world, but you will find none; whereas the *fruit of righteouſneſs*, of a ſincere and impartial, though imperfect obedience to the law of God, *is peace and aſſurance for ever.*

6thly, and laſtly. To facilitate the exerciſe of devotion, cultivate in your minds juſt ideas of God with whom you have to do upon thoſe occaſions, and diveſt your minds, as far as poſſible, of all ſuperſtitious and diſhonourable

diſhonourable notions of him. Conſider him as the good father of the prodigal ſon, in that excellent parable of our Saviour. Let it ſink deep into your minds, as one of the moſt important of all principles, that the God with whom we have to do, is eſſentially, of himſelf, and without regard to any foreign conſideration whatever, *abundant in mercy, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that he had rather that all ſhould come to repentance*; and then, notwithſtanding you conſider yourſelves as frail, imperfect, and ſinful creatures; and though you cannot help accuſing yourſelves of much negligence, folly, and vice, you may ſtill approach him with perfect confidence, in his readineſs to receive, love, and cheriſh you, upon your ſincere return to him.

In this light our Lord Jeſus Chriſt always repreſented *his father and our father, his God and our God.* This is the moſt ſolid ground of conſolation to minds burdened with a ſenſe of guilt; and what is of great advantage, it is the moſt natural, the moſt eaſy, and intelligible of all others. If once you quit this firm hold, you involve yourſelves in a ſyſtem, and a labyrinth, in which you either abſolutely find no reſt, and wander in uncertainty and horror; or, if you do attain to any thing of aſſurance, it is of ſuch a kind, and in ſuch a manner

manner, as can hardly fail to feed that *ſpiritual pride*, which will lead you to deſpiſe others; nay, unleſs counteracted by other cauſes, too often ends in a ſpirit of cenſoriouſneſs, hatred, and perſecution.

Religious melancholy, the moſt deplorable of all the caſes of melancholy, will never be effectually relieved by any conſideration, but that of the mercy and clemency of the Divine Being. This unhappy ſtate of mind ariſes from ſuperſtition. It conſiſts in an exceſſive and unreaſonable fear of God, and is peculiarly incident to perſons of the greateſt tenderneſs of conſcience. And if we conſider nothing but the holineſs of the divine nature, and our proneneſs to vice and folly, there will be no end of this diſtreſſing ſcrupuloſity in the beſt diſpoſed minds. But, in our ſituation, we muſt learn to acquieſce in the ſenſe of our manifold imperfections, and the unavoidable conſequences of them; and to take refuge in the goodneſs and compaſſion of God, who *conſiders our frame, and remembers that we are but duſt*. This is the part of humility.

So long as we are ſeeking to juſtify ourſelves in the ſight of God, (unleſs our minds be abſolutely blinded) we ſhall not fail to condemn ourſelves; for *there is not a man upon earth, not even the moſt* juſt and righteous man,

man, *who doeth good and ſinneth not.* Yea, *in many things we offend all:* ſo that *if we ſhould ſay we have no ſin, we ſhould deceive ourſelves, and the truth would not be in us:* but it is a never failing ſource of conſolation, that *if we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.*

Moreover, let it be conſiderd, by perſons labouring under this deplorable calamity, that this fear of diſpleaſing God, and anxiety about our future ſtate, is one of the beſt evidences we can have that *our hearts are,* upon the whole, *right towards God;* that we are ſeeking firſt, and before all things elſe, *the kingdom of God and* his *righteouſneſs,* and that we are not ſo much concerned about *the bread that periſhes,* as about *that which endures to everlaſting life.* Our Saviour ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted; bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled;* ſo that this exceſs of religious fear, producing deſpondence and melancholy, is a ſtate of greater ſafety, though it be leſs pleaſing than that of religious joy.

This fear of God, when it has once exceeded its due bounds, and degenerated into ſuperſtition; and when it is not cured by a confidence

confidence in the divine mercy and clemency, by that *love which caſteth out fear*, is of a moſt alarming nature, and has often been productive of the moſt fatal effects. What is it that ſuperſtitious mortals have ſcrupled either to do, or ſuffer, in order to recommend themſelves to God! Voluntary pains, and penalties, of the moſt frightful kinds, have not been ſpared for this purpoſe; and men, like ourſelves, yea, *the excellent of the earth*, men *of whom the world was not worthy* have been perſecuted, and maſſacred, under the idea of *doing God ſervice.*

I ſhall, alſo, here give an admonition concerning another inconvenience we are apt to be betrayed into, by imperfect and unworthy conceptions of God. It is that kind of enthuſiaſm, which ariſes from an exceſs of religious joy, as the ſuperſtition I have juſt deſcribed ariſes from an exceſs of religious fear. It is well known, that in the beginning of a religious life, perſons of a warm temper of mind, are apt to be carried away with extreme fervour. They are ſwelled with a tumultuous and rapturous joy, atended with great zeal in the diſcharge of their duty. But all this is of ſhort continuance, and generally ends in a moſt unaccountable *languor*, and even a total indifference about religion, which aſtoniſhes them, and which they are apt to conſider as

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the conſequence of the preſence of God deſerting them; that peculiar preſence which they ſuppoſed to be the cauſe of the preceding fervour. Alſo, in this deadneſs to devotional fervour, and indifference about religion, they are apt to imagine their former experience to have been an illuſion. All religion, in that ſtate of their minds, appears like a dream; and they afterwards often fancy themſelves to have been tempted by the devil, to diſbelieve and renounce it all, natural and revealed.

But the peculiar warmth of thoſe emotions is owing to the novelty of them, together with a kind of *familiarity* in our conceptions of God, which leads to ſuch a paſſionate joy, as we naturally indulge with reſpect to beings like ourſelves. But more awful, and on account of the preceding exceſſive familiarity, too awful ideas of God will follow and check that fond tranſport. The emotion itſelf having been above the uſual tenor of the ſenſations, will of courſe ſubſide, and the idea of God, being as yet ſingle, as we may ſay, and not aſſociated with a ſufficient variety of other objects, cannot long be retained in the mind, any more than any other ſingle idea, unconnected with others. Conſequently, other objects, and trains of thought which we have been before accuſtomed to, will force themſelves upon the mind; and theſe not having had any previous connexions with the ideas

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of God and religion, will exclude them, ſo that the former religious ſtate of mind will as abſolutely diſappear, for a time, as if it had never exiſted.

All this, however, is perfectly natural, and will give no alarm to thoſe who have a ſufficient knowledge of human nature. In this caſe, a perſon who would favour his progreſs in religion, ſhould calmly acquieſce in the imperfection of his devotion. He ſhould give himſelf, in the intervals of it, to the ſteady proſecution of his lawful buſineſs, conſidering that as his proper *duty*, as *ſerving mankind*, and *ſerving God*, and therefore by no means foreign to religion; depending upon it, that, if he only be careful to *keep his conſcience void of offence*, his devotional feelings will return in due time. Let him then endeavour to purify and exalt his conceptions of God as much as poſſible; for this will tend, both to give him humiliating views of himſelf, and to make his pious emotions more compoſed, and more permanent. And, by degrees, by frequently endeavouring to raiſe his views above the world, while he is employed in it, religion will come to be no longer the buſineſs of an hour, or of a limited time with him, but he will *walk with God all the day long*, and proceed in the path of his duty with a calm, and equal, a ſteady, and a perſevering progreſs.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe with obſerving, that if a perſon ſhould never experience any thing of this fervour of devotion, I have been endeavouring to deſcribe and explain, I ſhould by no means pronounce him the leſs ſafe on that account. This fervour of devotion is in a manner incompatible with the conſtitution of ſome perſons minds; and an uniform care *to glorify God in all our actions*, and to *preſerve a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards all men*, without any thing of that warmth of zeal and devotion, which often delights, but alſo often miſleads others; this, I ſay, will certainly be ſufficient, according to the gracious conſtitution of the goſpel, to entitle a perſon to that *glorious recompence of reward*, to that *eternal life*, which awaits all thoſe who, by nothing but *patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, honour, and immortality*. Our Saviour himſelf has aſſured us, that if a man *do the will of God* (he makes no other condition, he deſcribes no particular *feeling*) he ſhall be to him as *a brother, a ſiſter, or a mother*.

We well know, my chriſtian brethren, *what it is that the Lord our God requires of us*, in order to live and to die in his favour, namely, *to do juſtice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God*. To this plain path of duty, then, let us adhere, without being anxious about any thing far-

ther. Whether we have thoſe fervours of devotion, which ſome feel, and are apt to be proud of, or not, we ſhall experience that *great peace of mind*, which *all thoſe have who keep God's law*; and having lived the life of the righteous, our *latter end alſo will be like his*; the foundation of our joy being *the teſtimony of our conſciences, that in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world.*

It is true, we are imperfect, ſinful creatures: but, notwithſtanding this, we have all poſſible encouragement given us, to truſt in the abundant mercy of our gracious God and father, in that mercy which is eſſential to his nature, as a Being who is infinitely good, and who is *love itſelf*; and which, if we could entertain the leaſt doubt concerning it, he has fully declared to all the world, by Moſes and the Prophets, by Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles; whom he ſent into the world to preach the grateful doctrine *of repentance and remiſſion of ſins*, thereby *to redeem (i. e. to deliver) us from all iniquity*, and *to reconcile us to God*. Animated, therefore, by the glorious promiſes of the goſpel, *let us*, my chriſtian brethren, *be ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of our Lord, knowing that our labour ſhall not finally be in vain in the Lord.*

The

The Duty of not living to Ourſelves.

For none of us liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf.

ROMANS 14. 7.

IT is the excellence of our rational nature that by it we are capable of living to ſome known end, and of governing our lives and conduct by ſome rule; whereas brute creatures neceſſarily live and act at random, juſt as the preſent appetite influences them. Let us then, my brethren, make the moſt of this our prerogative, by propoſing to ourſelves the nobleſt end of human life, and engaging in ſuch a courſe of actions as will reflect the greateſt honour upon our nature, and be productive of the moſt ſolid and laſting happineſs, both in the performance and the review of them.

Agreeably to this, let the principal uſe we make of our underſtanding be to diſcover what the great end of life is; and then let us uſe the reſolution and fortitude that is

either natural to us, or acquired by us, in ſteadily conforming ourſelves to it.

But as the regular inveſtigation of the rule of life, from the light of nature only, may be tedious and perhaps at laſt unſatisfactory, let us, without waiting for the reſult of ſuch an enquiry upon the principles of reaſon, take a more clear and ſure guide, the holy ſcriptures, in ſo important a ſubject, and ſee, afterwards, whether reaſon and experience will not give their ſanction to that deciſion.

The great end of human life is negatively expreſſed by the apoſtle Paul in my text. *None of us liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf*; and, if we attend to the connection of theſe words, we ſhall find what, in the apoſtle's idea, is the true end to which men ought to live.

The apoſtle is here treating of a controverſy which had ariſen in the chriſtian church, about the lawfulneſs of eating meat ſacrificed to idols, and keeping holy certain days, together with ſome other ceremonious obſervances, and exhorting both parties to do nothing that might give offence, or be a ſnare to the other; leſt, by their means, any one ſhould periſh for whom Chriſt died.

As

As the beſt foundation for mutual tenderneſs and charity, he reminds them that both parties acted, with regard to all ritual obſervances, as they imagined was the will of Chriſt. *He that obſerveth a day, obſerveth it to the Lord; and he that obſerveth not a day, to the Lord he obſerveth it not.* And after giving his ſanction in the fulleſt manner to this maxim, and deciding, with reſpect to this particular caſe, that all chriſtians ought to act according to the will of Chriſt, and conſult the good and the peace of their fellow chriſtians, he declares in general, that *no man liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord*; that is, in all our actions, our views ſhould not be directed to ourſelves, but to the intereſt of our holy religion. And as the chriſtian religion has for its object the happineſs of mankind; ſince, *Chriſt came to bleſs us in turning us away from our iniquities*; it is the ſame thing as if he had ſaid, the great ſcope of all our conduct ſhould be the real welfare of all to whom our influence can extend.

We ſhould, therefore, my brethren, according to this apoſtolical maxim, by no means confine our regards to ourſelves; and have our own pleaſure, profit, or advantage in view in every thing we undertake; but

look out of, and beyond ourſelves, and take a generous concern in the happineſs of all our brethren of mankind; make their ſorrows our ſorrows, their joys our joys, and their happineſs our purſuit: and it is in this diſintereſted conduct, and in this only, that we ſhall find our own true happineſs.

That this is the true rule of human life, will appear, whether we conſider the courſe of nature without us, the ſituation of mankind in this world, or take a nearer view of the principles of human nature. And we ſhall likewiſe find, that ſeveral conſiderations drawn from the holy ſcriptures will farther confirm and illuſtrate this maxim of human conduct which was firſt ſuggeſted by them.

1. This diſintereſted conduct of man is moſt agreeable to the courſe of nature without us. There is no part of the creation but, if it be viewed attentively, will expoſe the ſelfiſhneſs and narrow mindedneſs of men. For among all that infinite variety of things and creatures which preſent themſelves to our view, not one of them appears to have been made merely for itſelf, but every thing bears a relation to ſomething elſe. They can hardly be ſaid to afford any matter for contemplation ſingly, and are moſt of all the objects of our admiration when conſidered

dered as connected with other things. The primary uſes of things are few, but the ſecondary uſes of every thing are almoſt infinite. Indeed the ſecondary uſes of things are ſo many, that we are loſt in the multiplicity of them; whereas we can give no anſwer, if we be aſked what is the primary uſe of any thing, but this general one, which will equally ſuit every thing, that every creature which is capable of happineſs was made to enjoy that ſhare of it which is ſuited to its nature.

Now what do we mean when we ſay that the ſeveral parts of nature are *adapted to* one another, but that they are *made for the uſe* of one another. I ſhall mention only a few of theſe mutual relations and uſes; beginning with thoſe parts of nature which are the moſt remote from one another, and whoſe mutual relations and uſes are the leaſt obvious, and ſo proceed to thoſe in which they are more obvious. The ſun, the moon, the planets, and comets, are ſtrictly connected, and combined into one ſyſtem. Each body, though ſo exceedingly remote from the reſt, is admirably adapted, by its ſituation, magnitude, and velocity in its orbit to the ſtate of the whole, in thoſe reſpects and many others. This connection, probably, alſo extends to the remoteſt bodies in the

univerſe: ſo that it is impoſſible to ſay, that the withdrawing of any one would not, in ſome reſpect or other, affect all the reſt.

The clouds and the rain are deſigned to moiſten the earth, and the ſun to warm it; and the texture and juices of the earth are formed ſo as to receive the genial influences of both, in order to ripen and bring to perfection that infinite variety of plants and fruits, the ſeeds of which are depoſited in it. Again, is not each plant peculiarly adapted to its proper ſoil and climate, ſo that every country is furniſhed with thoſe productions which are peculiarly ſuited to it? Are not all plants likewiſe ſuited to the various kinds of animals which feed upon them? ſo that, though they enjoy a kind of life peculiar to themſelves, and all the influences they are expoſed to be adapted to promote that life, they themſelves are as much adapted to maintain that higher kind of life which is enjoyed by creatures of the animal nature.

The various kinds of animals are, again, in a thouſand ways adapted to, and formed for, the uſe of one another. Beaſts of a fiercer nature prey upon the tamer cattle: fiſhes of a larger ſize live almoſt wholly upon thoſe of a leſs: and there are ſome birds which prey upon land animals, others upon fiſhes, and others upon creatures of their own ſpecies.

That

That brute animals are excellently adapted to the uſe of man, and were, therefore, made to be ſubſervient to the uſe of man, man will not deny. The ſtrength of ſome, and the ſagacity of others are as much at our command, and are as effectually employed for our uſe, as if they belonged to ourſelves. We can even turn to our advantage every paſſion of their nature; ſo that we can ſafely repoſe the greateſt confidence in many of them. They are the guardians of our poſſeſſions and of our lives. They even enter into our reſentments, and, at our inſtigation, take part in our revenge.

Having now advanced to man, the chief of this lower creation, and ſhewn that all creatures of the vegetable, and merely animal nature live and die for his uſe; pride might bid us here break off the chain of mutual relations and uſes which we have been purſuing thus far, and leave man in the enjoyment of his ſuperiority; but, beſide that it is contrary to the analogy of nature, in which we ſee nothing but what has innumerable ſecondary relations and uſes, that man only ſhould be made for himſelf;

2. The ſituation of man in this world, or the external circumſtances of human nature ſtill oblige us to aſſert, with Paul, that *no man*

man liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf. Man himſelf is but a link, though the higheſt link of this great chain, all the parts of which are cloſely connected by the hand of our divine author. Nay, the more various and extenſive are our powers, either for action or enjoyment, on that very account, the more multiplied and extenſive are our wants: ſo that, at the ſame time that they are marks of our ſuperiority to, they are bonds of our connection with, and ſigns of our dependance upon, the various parts of the world around us, and of our ſubſervience to one another.

In fact, every time that we gratify any of our ſenſes, though it be in conſequence of the exertion of our own powers, we are reminded (if we will be ſo juſt to ourſelves as to take the hint) of our dependance upon ſomething without us: for the means of our gratification are, in all caſes, evidently without ourſelves.

If we be ſerved by the vegetables and the animals which this earth affords, we are obliged, in our turn, to favour their propagation, to promote their cultivation, and to preſerve them in a healthy and vigorous ſtate: and employment of this kind doth, in fact, take up a great part of our attention and labour. We muſt make the creature in ſome meaſure happy, if we would be effectually

tually ſerved by it. And the attention which domeſtic animals give to us, and their anxiety for us is not to be compared to the attention we beſtow on them, and the anxiety we undergo on their account.

But my ſubject leads me to attend to the connection which man has with man, rather than with the inferior part of the creation; tho' it ſeemed not improper to point out that. In general, nothing can be more obvious than the mutual dependance of mankind on one another. We ſee it in the moſt barbarous countries, where the connections of mankind are the feweſt and the ſlighteſt. This dependance is more ſenſible, indeed, in a ſtate of infancy, when the leaſt remiſſion of the care of others would be fatal to us; but it is as real and neceſſary, and even vaſtly more extenſive, tho' leſs ſtriking, when we are more advanced in life, eſpecially in civilized countries. And the more perfect is the ſtate of civil ſociety, the more various and extended are the connections which man has with man, and the leſs able is he to ſubſiſt comfortably without the help of others.

The buſineſs of human life, where it is enjoyed in perfection, is ſubdivided into ſo many parts (each of which is executed by different

different hands) that a perſon who would reap the benefit of all the arts of life in perfection muſt employ, and conſequently be dependant upon, thouſands: he muſt even be under obligations to numbers of whom he has not the leaſt knowledge.

Theſe connections of man with man are every day growing more extenſive. The moſt diſtant parts of the earth are now connected: every part is every day growing ſtill more neceſſary to every other part. And the nearer advances we make to general happineſs, and the more commodious our circumſtances in this world are made for us, the more intimately and extenſively we become connected with, and the more cloſely we are dependent upon, one another.

By thus tracing the progreſs of man to that ſtate of happineſs which he now enjoys, we may be led to think, that, in purſuing it ſtill farther, to a more happy ſtate of being, adapted to our ſocial natures, we ſhall find ourſelves ſtill more variouſly and intimately connected with, and more cloſely dependant upon one another: which affords a far nobler and more pleaſing proſpect to a perſon of an enlarged mind, and of a ſocial and benevolent diſpoſition, than he could have from ſuppoſing, that after death, all our mutual connections will be broken,

broken, and that every good man will be made tranſcendently happy within himſelf, having no intercourſe, or at leaſt neceſſary intercourſe with any being beſide his maker.

By theſe arguments, which are drawn from facts that are obvious to every perſon who attends to the external circumſtances of mankind, it is plain that no man *can* live of himſelf; and even that the rich are, in fact, more dependant upon others than the poor; for, having more wants, they have occaſion for more, and more frequent ſupplies. Now it will eaſily be allowed, that every reaſon why we cannot live of ourſelves, is an argument why we ought not to live to ourſelves: for certainly no perſon receives an obligation, but he ought to confer one. Every connection muſt, in ſome meaſure, be mutual. And, indeed, the circulation of good offices would in a great meaſure ceaſe, if the paſſage were not as open, and as free from obſtruction in one part of the common channel as another. The rich, if they would receive the greateſt advantages from ſociety, muſt contribute to the happineſs of it. If they act upon different maxims, and think to avail themſelves of the pleaſures of ſociety without promoting the good of it, they will never know the true pleaſures of ſociety. And, in the end, they will be found to have enjoyed the

the leaſt themſelves, who have leaſt contributed to the enjoyment of others.

Thus it appears from a view of the external circumſtances of mankind, that man was not made to live to himſelf. The ſame truth may be inferred,

3. From a nearer inſpection of the principles of human nature, and the ſprings of human actions.

If any man look into himſelf, and conſider the ſprings and motives of his own actions, he will find that there are principles in his nature which would be of no uſe, were the intercourſe he has with his fellow creatures cut off: for that both the efficient and final cauſes of their operations are without himſelf. They are views of mankind, and their ſituations, which call thoſe principles into action. And if we trace the operation of them, we ſhall clearly ſee that, though they be ſtrictly connected with private happineſs, their ultimate and proper object is the happineſs of ſociety.

What other account can we give of that impulſe which we all, more or leſs, feel for ſociety? And whence is that reſtleſs and painful diſſatisfaction which a man feels when he is long

long excluded from it, but that, in ſuch a ſolitary condition, his faculties have not their proper exerciſe, and he is, as it were, out of his proper element?

Whence is that quick ſenſibility which we are conſcious of, with reſpect to both the joys and the ſorrows of our fellow creatures, if their happineſs or miſery were a matter of indifference to us? Can we feel what is ſometimes called the contagion of the paſſions, when we find that our minds contract a kind of gloom and heavineſs in the company of the melancholy, and that this melancholy vaniſhes in company which is innocently chearful, and queſtion the influence of ſocial connections? Much leſs can the reality or the power of the ſocial principle be doubted when a fellow creature in diſtreſs calls forth the moſt exquiſite feelings of compaſſion, attended with inſtant and ſtrong efforts towards his relief.

So eſſential a part of our nature are theſe ſocial paſſions, that it is impoſſible for any man wholly to eſcape the influence of them; but if we would be witneſs of their ſtrongeſt effects, and ſee them branched out into that beautiful ſubordination which correſponds to all the varieties of our mutual relations, we muſt look into domeſtic life. There we ſhall clearly ſee that the moſt frequent and almoſt

almoſt the only cauſe of a man's joys and ſorrows are the joys and ſorrows of others, and that the immediate aim of all his actions is the well being and happineſs of others.

Doth not the ſenſe of honour in the human breaſt derive all its force from the influence which ſocial connections have over us? Of what uſe could it be but to beings formed for ſociety? What do we infer from our dread of infamy, and from our being ſo ſtrongly actuated by a paſſion for fame, and alſo from the univerſality and extent of this principle, but that our nature obliges us to keep up a regard to others in our whole conduct, and that the author of nature intended we ſhould? And is it not a farther evidence of the ultimate deſign of this principle, that, in general, the means of being diſtinguiſhed, at leaſt of gaining a ſolid and laſting reputation among men, is to be uſeful to mankind; public utility being the moſt direct road to true fame.

Every noble and exalted faculty of our nature is either directly of a ſocial nature, or tends to ſtrengthen the ſocial principle. Nothing can be more evident than that the dictates of conſcience ſtrongly enforce the practice of benevolence: and the pleaſures of benevolence certainly conſtitute the greateſt part of thoſe pleaſures which we refer to the moral ſenſe,

ſenſe. They muſt neceſſarily do ſo, while the foundation of all virtue and right conduct is the happineſs of ſociety: for then every reflection that we have done our duty, muſt be the ſame thing as a reflection that we have contributed what was in our power to the good of our fellow creatures.

Laſtly, of what doth devotion itſelf conſiſt, but the exerciſe of the ſocial affections? What are the diſpoſitions of our minds which are called forth into action in private or public prayer, but reverence for true greatneſs, humility, gratitude, love, and confidence in God, as the greateſt and beſt of Beings; qualities of the moſt admirable uſe and effect in ſocial life.

I may add that not only are the higheſt and the worthieſt principles of human conduct either truly ſocial, or a reinforcement of the ſocial principle, but even the loweſt appetites and paſſions of our nature are far from being indifferent to ſocial connections, conſiderations, and influences. That the pleaſures we receive from the fine arts, as thoſe of muſic, poetry, and painting, and the like, are enjoyed but very imperfectly except in company, is very evident to all perſons who have the leaſt taſte for thoſe pleaſures. I may even venture to ſay that there is hardly a voluptuary, the

moſt devoted to the pleaſures of the table, but indulges himſelf with more ſatisfaction in company than alone.

Having given this general view of the ſocial turn of our whole natures; whereby we are continually led out of ourſelves in our purſuit of happineſs; I ſhall now conſider farther, how all our appetites and paſſions, which are the ſprings of all our actions, do, in their own nature, tend to lead us out of ourſelves, and how much our happineſs depends upon our keeping their proper objects in view, and upon our minds being thereby conſtantly engaged upon ſomething foreign to themſelves; after which I ſhall ſhew what are the fitteſt objects thus to engage our attention.

In order to preſerve mutual connexion, dependance, and harmony among all his works, it has pleaſed our divine author to appoint, that all our appetites and deſires, to whatever ſenſe, external or internal, they be referred, ſhould point to ſomething beyond ourſelves for their gratification; ſo that the idea of *ſelf* is not in the leaſt neceſſary to a ſtate of the higheſt enjoyment.

When may men be ſaid to be happy, but when their faculties are properly exerciſed in the purſuit of thoſe things which give them

pleaſure. I ſay the purſuit rather than the enjoyment, not becauſe enjoyment makes no part of our happineſs; but becauſe the vigorous and agreeable ſenſations with which our minds are impreſſed during the purſuit of a favourite object are generally, at leaſt in this life, of vaſtly more conſideration. The pleaſure we receive the inſtant we arrive at the height of our wiſhes may be more exquiſite, but the others are of much longer continuance; and, immediately upon the gratification of any of our deſires, the mind is inſtantly reaching after ſome new object.

Suppoſing now the mind of any perſon to be fully and conſtantly engaged in the purſuit of a proper object, to the poſſeſſion of which he is ſenſible he every day makes nearer approaches, and his deſires be not ſo eager as to make him uneaſy during the purſuit, what more is requiſite to make him as happy as his nature can bear? He will not be the leſs happy becauſe the object he is in purſuit of is foreign to himſelf; nor would it make him any happier to have the idea of its contributing to his happineſs. Nay it may be ſhewn, that it were better for us, in general, with reſpect to real enjoyment, never to have the idea of the relation which the objects of our purſuit bear to ourſelves: and this is moſt of all evident

with reſpect to the higher pleaſures of our nature, from which we derive our greateſt happineſs.

Our benevolence, for inſtance, leads us immediately to relieve and oblige others. Pleaſure, indeed, always attends generous actions, and is conſequent upon them; but the ſatisfaction we receive in our minds from having done kind offices to others is far leſs pure, and leſs perfectly enjoyed, if at all, when we had this, or any other private gratification in view before the action.

In like manner, he who courts applauſe, and does worthy actions ſolely with a view to obtain it, can have no knowledge of the genuine pleaſure ariſing either from the good action itſelf; or the applauſe that is given to it; becauſe he is ſenſible, in his own mind, that if thoſe perſons who praiſe his conduct were acquainted with the real motive of it, and knew that he meant nothing more, by his pretended acts of piety and benevolence, than to gain their applauſe, they would be ſo far from admiring and commending, that they would deſpiſe him for it.

It is evident, for the ſame reaſon, that no perſon can enjoy the applauſe of his own mind, on the account of any action which he

he did with a view to gain it. The pleaſures of a good conſcience, or, as they are ſometimes called, thoſe of the moral ſenſe, cannot be enjoyed but by a perſon who ſteadily obeys the dictates of his conſcience, and uniformly acts the part which he thinks to be right, without any view to the pleaſure and ſelf-ſatisfaction which may ariſe from it.

The idea of *ſelf*, as it is not adapted to gratify any of our appetites, and can contribute nothing towards their gratification, can only occaſion anxiety, fear, and diſtruſt about our happineſs, when it is frequently the ſubject of our thoughts. The apprehenſion and dread of miſery (which is certainly the occaſion of moſt of the real trouble and miſery of men in this life) is beyond meaſure increaſed from this ſource: and the effects of it are moſt ſenſibly felt both in the leſſer and greater ſcenes of our lives.

It is chiefly an anxious ſolicitude about ourſelves, and the appearance we ſhall make in the eyes of others, which is the cauſe of that affectation and conſtraint in behaviour which is ſo troubleſome to a perſon's ſelf, and ſo ridiculous in the eyes of others. This trifling remark, being ſo frequently verified, may ſerve to ſhew that theſe ſentiments are by no means merely ſpeculative; but that

they enter into the daily ſcenes of active life. Indeed they are in the higheſt ſenſe practical, and upon them depend thoſe maxims of conduct, which contain the great ſecret of human happineſs, and which are confirmed by every day's experience.

That the idea of *ſelf* frequently occurring to our minds in our purſuit of happineſs is often a real and great obſtruction to it, will be more obvious from a ſhort ſeries of plain facts and examples, which I ſhall therefore mention.

Why are brute creatures, in general, ſo contented and happy in their low ſphere of life, and much more ſo than the mind of man could be in their ſituation? Is it not becauſe their views are perpetually fixed upon ſome object within their reach, adapted to their deſires; and that the abſtract idea of *ſelf*, together with the notion of their being in the purſuit of happineſs, and liable to be diſappointed in that purſuit, never comes in their way, to interrupt the uniform and pleaſurable exertion of their faculties in the purſuit of their proper objects.

The days of our infancy are happy for the ſame reaſon, notwithſtanding the imperfection of our faculties, and the greater proportion

portion of pains and diſorders we are then liable to. Thoſe years of our lives ſlide away in unmixed enjoyment; except when they are interrupted by the actual ſenſations of pain: for we are then incapable of ſuffering any thing from the *fear* of evil. It is not till after a conſiderable time that we get the abſtract idea of *ſelf*; an idea, which the brutes, probably, never arrive at, and which is of excellent uſe to us, as will be ſhewn in its proper place, in our purſuit of happineſs; but is often abuſed to the great increaſe of our miſery, as will appear by the facts we are now conſidering.

Why are perſons whoſe ſituation in life obliges them to conſtant labour, either of body or mind, generally more happy than thoſe whoſe circumſtances do not lay them under a neceſſity to labour, and whoſe own inclination does not lead them to it; but becauſe the former have their thoughts conſtantly employed in the purſuit of ſome end, which keeps their faculties awake, and fully exerted? And this is always attended with a ſtate of vigorous, and conſequently pleaſurable ſenſations. Perſons thus employed have not much leiſure to attend to the idea of ſelf, and that anxiety which always attends the frequent recurring of it; whereas a perſon who has no object foreign to himſelf,

which conſtantly and neceſſarily engages his attention, cannot have his faculties fully exerted; and therefore his mind cannot poſſibly be in that ſtate of vigorous ſenſation in which happineſs conſiſts.

The mind of ſuch a perſon, having nothing without him ſufficient to engage its attention, turns upon itſelf. He feels he is not happy, but he ſees not the reaſon of it. This again excites his wonder, vexation, and perplexity. He tries new expedients: but as theſe are only temporary, and generally whimſical choices; none of them have ſufficient power to fix and confine his attention. He is ſtill perpetually thinking about himſelf, and wondering and uneaſy that he is not happy. This anxious perplexed ſtate of mind, affecting the nervous ſyſtem neceſſarily occaſions a more irritable ſtate of the nerves, and of the brain, which makes the unhappy perſon ſubject to more frequent alarms, to greater anxiety and diſtreſs than before; till, theſe mental and bodily diſorders mutually increaſing one another, his condition is at length the moſt wretched and diſtreſſing that can be conceived. No bodily pain, no rack, no torture can equal the miſery and diſtreſs of a human being whoſe mind is thus a prey to itſelf. No wonder that, in this ſituation, many perſons wiſh the utter extinction

tinction of their being, and often put a period to their lives.

This is certainly the moſt deplorable ſituation to which a human being can be reduced in this world, and is doubly the object of our compaſſion, when the diſorder has its ſeat originally in the body, in ſuch a manner, that no endeavours to engage a man's thoughts upon other objects can force his attention from himſelf.

It is no wonder that we ſee more of this kind of unhappineſs in the higher ranks of life, and among perſons who are in what is called *eaſy circumſtances* than in any other. Indeed, the caſe is hardly poſſible in any other than in eaſy circumſtances. For did a man's circumſtances really find conſtant employment for his thoughts, were his buſineſs ſo urgent as to leave him no leiſure for ſuſpenſe and uncertainty what to do, it is plain, from the preceding principles, that ſuch anxiety and diſtreſs could not take place. It is well known that the mind ſuffers more in a ſtate of uncertainty and ſuſpenſe, for want of ſome motive to determine a man's choice, than he can ſuffer in the vigorous proſecution of the moſt arduous undertaking. I appeal to men of leiſure, and particularly to perſons who

are naturally of an active and enterprizing diſpoſition for the truth of this fact.

Theſe principles likewiſe, as is evident without entering into a detail of particulars, furniſh us with a good reaſon why we generally ſee fathers and mothers of large families infinitely more eaſy, chearful, and happy, than thoſe perſons who have no family-connections. The greater affluence, eaſe, and variety of pleaſures which theſe can command (ſubject to the inconveniences I have mentioned, and which are commonly viſible enough in the caſe I refer to) are a poor equivalent for the neceſſary, conſtant, and vigorous exertion of their faculties, and conſequently the ſtrong ſenſations and lively enjoyments which a variety of family cares, conjugal and parental tenderneſs ſupply for the others.

This would be the caſe univerſally, where large families could ſubſiſt, if the parents had ſufficient employment, and if an early acquired taſte for ſuperfluities, had not taken too deep root in their minds.

Happy is it for the world, and a great mark of the wiſdom and goodneſs of divine providence, that men's minds are ſo conſtituted, that though they be in eaſy circumſtances, they are never completely ſatisfied.

The

The paſſions of moſt men are ſtill engaging them in a variety of purſuits, in which they are as eager, and which they proſecute with as much alacrity and earneſtneſs, as if neceſſity compelled them to it. Otherwiſe every perſon who could live eaſy would be inevitably miſerable.

Infinitely happier would it be for themſelves, and for the world, if all their purſuits were ſuch as would give them ſatisfaction upon the reflection as well as in the purſuit, and be of real advantage to the reſt of mankind; which two circumſtances never fail to coincide. However, with regard to a perſon's ſelf in this life, any end is unſpeakably better than no end at all; and ſuch is the wiſe appointment of providence, that bad ends tend in a variety of ways, to check and defeat themſelves, and to throw the minds of men into better, nobler, and more ſatisfactory purſuits. A conſideration, which cannot fail to ſuggeſt, to a benevolent and pious mind, a proſpect of a future happy and glorious ſtate of things.

It may be ſaid, that if happineſs conſiſt in, or depend upon the exertion of our faculties upon ſome object foreign to ourſelves, it is a matter of indifference what the object be. I anſwer, that during the purſuit it is

is nearly ſo, and univerſal experience, I imagine, will juſtify the obſervation. This is the reaſon why we ſee men equally eager, and equally happy in the purſuit of a variety of things which appear trifling to one another. Thus the floriſt, the medaliſt, the critic, the antiquary, and every adept in the minuter branches of ſcience, all enjoy equal happineſs in the purſuit of their ſeveral objects; and as much as the hiſtorian, the aſtronomer, the moraliſt, or the divine, who refers his nobler ſtudies to no higher end, and to whom they only ſerve as an exerciſe of his faculties.

But though an eager purſuit tends to keep the mind in a ſtate of vigorous and lively ſenſations, that purſuit only can give us the *maximum*, the higheſt poſſible degree of happineſs, which has the following characters. It muſt be attended with the probability of ſucceſs, conſequently it muſt be generally ſucceſsful; and it muſt alſo terminate in ſuch gratifications as are leaſt inconſiſtent with themſelves, or with the other gratifications of which our nature makes us capable. And it may be demonſtrated (though I ſhall not undertake to do it particularly in this place) that no purſuits anſwer to this deſcription but thoſe in which the love of mankind, the

love

love of God, or the dictates of conſcience engage us.

For in all other purſuits, ſuch as thoſe of ſenſual pleaſure, the pleaſures of imagination, and ambition, we are liable to frequent diſappointments; the gratifications in which they terminate are inconſiſtent with themſelves, and with each other; and they almoſt entirely deaden and diſqualify the mind for the nobler pleaſures of our nature. It is the love of God, the love of mankind, and a ſenſe of duty which engage the minds of men in the nobleſt of all purſuits. By theſe we are carried on with increaſing alacrity and ſatisfaction. Even the pains and diſtreſſes in which we involve ourſelves by theſe courſes are preferable to the pleaſures attending the gratification of our lower appetites.

Beſides, theſe noble purſuits, generally at leaſt, allow us even more of the lower gratifications of our nature than can be obtained by a direct purſuit of them. For a little experience will inform us, that we receive the moſt pleaſure from theſe lower appetites of our nature, as well as from the higheſt ſources of pleaſure we are capable of, when we have their gratification leaſt of all in view. There can be no doubt, for inſtance, but that the labourer who eats and drinks merely to ſatisfy the

the calls of hunger and thirſt has vaſtly more pleaſure in eating and drinking than the epicure who ſtudies the pleaſing of his palate.

They are the pleaſures of benevolence and piety which moſt effectually carry us out of ourſelves; whereas every other inferior purſuit ſuggeſts to us, in a thouſand reſpects, the idea of *ſelf*, the unſeaſonable intervention of which may be called the *worm* which lies *at the root* of all human bliſs. And never can we be completely happy, till we *love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our ſoul, with all our mind, and with all our ſtrength; and our neighbour as ourſelves.*

This is the chriſtian *ſelf-annihilation*, and a ſtate of the moſt complete happineſs to which our natures can attain; when, without having the leaſt idea of being in the purſuit of our own happineſs, our faculties are wholly abſorbed in thoſe noble and exalted purſuits, in which we are ſure not to be finally diſappointed, and in the courſe of which we enjoy all the conſiſtent pleaſures of our whole nature. When, *rejoicing with all that rejoice, weeping with all that weep*, and intimately aſſociating the idea of God, the maker of all things, our father and our friend, with all the works of his hands, and all the diſpenſations of his providence, we conſtantly triumph in the

the comfortable ſenſe of the divine preſence and approbation, and in the tranſporting proſpect of advancing every day nearer to the accompliſhment of his glorious purpoſes for the happineſs of his creatures.

If this be the proper and ſupreme happineſs of man, it may be aſked of what uſe is the principle of ſelf-intereſt. I anſwer, that though an attention to it be inconſiſtent with pure unmixed happineſs, yet a moderate attention to it is of excellent uſe in our progreſs towards it. It ſerves as a ſcaffold to a noble and glorious edifice, though it be unworthy of ſtanding as any part of it. It is of more particular uſe to check and reſtrain the indulgence of our lower appetites and paſſions, before other objects and motives have acquired a ſufficient power over us. But though we ought, therefore, to exhort thoſe perſons who are immerſed in ſenſuality and groſs vices, to abandon thoſe indulgencies out of a regard to their true intereſt, it is adviſable to withdraw this motive by degrees. However, as we ſhall never arrive at abſolute perfection, we neceſſarily muſt, and indeed ought to be influenced by it more or leſs through the whole courſe of our exiſtence, only leſs and leſs perpetually.

The

The principle of ſelf intereſt may be regarded as a medium between the lower and the higher principles of our nature, and therefore of principal uſe in our tranſition, as we may call it, from an imperfect to a more perfect ſtate.

Perhaps the following view of this ſubject may be the eaſieſt to us. A regard to our greateſt happineſs muſt neceſſarily govern our conduct with reſpect to all thoſe virtues which are termed *private virtues*, as temperance, chaſtity, and every branch of ſelf government; but it always does harm as a motive to the *ſocial virtues*. When therefore, ſelf government, which is our firſt ſtep towards happineſs, is eſtabliſhed; we ought to endeavour to actuate men by higher and nobler motives: for, with regard to all thoſe virtues, the ultimate object of which is not private happineſs, an attention to ſelf-intereſt is of manifeſt prejudice to us, and this through the whole courſe of our lives, imperfect as we are, and as much occaſion as we have for every effectual motive to virtue.

We are now come, in the laſt place, to ſee what conſiderations drawn from the holy ſcriptures, will farther confirm and illuſtrate this maxim of human conduct which was firſt ſuggeſted by them.

That

That the ſcriptures join the voice of all nature around us, informing man that he is not made for himſelf, that they inculcate the ſame leſſon which we learn both from a view of the external circumſtances of mankind, and alſo from a nearer inſpection of the principles of human nature, will be evident whether we conſider the object of the religion they exhibit (that is the temper to which we are intended to be formed by it) or the motives by which it is enforced and recommended to us in them.

That the end and deſign of our holy religion, chriſtians, was to form us to the moſt diſintereſted benevolence cannot be doubted by any perſon who conſults the holy ſcriptures, and eſpecially the books of the New Teſtament.

There we plainly ſee the principle of benevolence repreſented, when it is in its due ſtrength and degree, as equal in point of intenſeneſs to that of ſelf-love. *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* The plain conſequence of this is, that if all our brethren of mankind with whom we are connected have an equal claim upon us (ſince our connections are daily growing more extenſive, and we ourſelves are conſequently growing daily of leſs relative importance in our own

eyes) the principle of benevolence muſt in the end abſolutely ſwallow up that of ſelf-love.

The moſt exalted devotion, as even ſuperior both to ſelf-love and benevolence, is always every where recommended to us: and the ſentiments of devotion have been ſhewn greatly to aid, and, in fact, to be the ſame with thoſe of benevolence: and they muſt be ſo, unleſs it can be ſhewn that we have ſome ſenſes, powers, or faculties which reſpect the Deity only.

In order to determine men to engage in a courſe of diſintereſted and generous actions, every motive which is calculated to work upon human nature is employed. And as mankind in general are deeply immerſed in vice and folly, their hopes, but more eſpecially their fears are acted upon in the ſtrongeſt manner by the proſpect of rewards and puniſhments. Even temporal rewards and puniſhments were propoſed to mankind in the earlier and ruder ages of the world; but as our notions of happineſs grow more enlarged, infinitely greater, but indefinite objects of hope and fear are ſet before us. Something unknown, but ſomething unſpeakably dreadful in a future world is perpetually held up to us, as a guard againſt the allurements

to vice and exceſs which the world abounds with. And ſtill farther to counteract their baleful influences, the heavenly world (the habitation of good men after death) is repreſented to us as a place in which we ſhall be completely happy, enjoying ſomething which is deſcribed as more than eye hath ſeen, ear heard, or than the heart of man can conceive.

Theſe motives are certainly addreſſed to the principle of ſelf-intereſt, urging us out of a regard to ourſelves, and our general happineſs, *to ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well.* And, indeed, no motives of a more generous nature, and drawn from more diſtant conſiderations can be ſuppoſed ſufficient to influence the bulk of mankind, and *bring them from the power of ſin, and Satan, unto God.*

But when, by the influence of theſe motives, it may be ſuppoſed that mankind are in ſome meaſure recovered from the groſſer pollutions of the world, and the principle of ſelf-intereſt has been played, as it were, againſt itſelf, and been a means of engaging us in a courſe and habit of actions which are neceſſarily connected with, and productive of more generous and noble principles, then

theſe nobler principles are thoſe which the ſacred writers chiefly inculcate.

Nothing is more frequent with the ſacred writers than to exhort men to the practice of their duty as the command of God, from a principle of love to God, of love to Chriſt, and of love to mankind, more eſpecially of our fellow chriſtians; and from a regard to the intereſt of our holy religion: motives which do not at all turn the attention of our minds upon themſelves. This is not borrowing the aid of ſelf-love to ſtrengthen the principles of benevolence and piety, but it is properly deriving additional ſtrength to theſe noble diſpoſitions, as it were, from within themſelves, independent of foreign conſiderations.

We may ſafely ſay that no degree or kind of ſelf-love is made uſe of in the ſcriptures but what is neceſſary to raiſe us above that principle. And ſome of the more refined kinds of ſelf-love, how familiar ſoever they may be in ſome ſyſtems of morals, never come in ſight there. We are never exhorted in the ſcriptures to do benevolent actions for the ſake of the reflex pleaſures of benevolence, or pious actions with a view to the pleaſures of devotion. This refined kind of ſelf-love is no where to be found in the ſcriptures.

Even

Even the pleaſures of a good conſcience, though they be of a more general nature, and there be leſs refinement in them than in ſome other pleaſures which are connected with the idea of *ſelf*, and though they be repreſented in the ſcriptures as the conſequence of good actions, and a ſource of joy, as a teſtimony of a perſon's being in the favour of God, and in the way to happineſs, are perhaps never directly propoſed to us as the reward of virtue. This motive to virtue makes a greater figure in the ſyſtem of the later ſtoics (thoſe heathen philoſophers who in conſequence of entertaining the moſt extravagant idea of their own merit really idolized their own natures, to a degree abſolutely blaſphemous) than in the ſcriptures. And if we conſider the nature of this principle we ſhall ſoon be ſenſible that if it be inculcated as a motive to virtue, and particularly the virtues of a ſublimer kind, it ſhould be with great caution; and in ſuch a manner as ſhall have the leaſt tendency to encourage ſelf applauſe. For does not ſelf applauſe border very nearly upon pride and ſelf conceit, and that ſpecies of it which is called ſpiritual pride, and which is certainly a moſt malignant diſpoſition.

If this ſame principle have power to excite ſuch ridiculous vanity, intolerable arro-

gance, inveterate rancour, and ſupercilious contempt of others, when it has nothing but the trifling advantage of ſkill in criticiſm, a talent for poetry, a taſte for belles lettres, or ſome other of the minuter parts of ſcience to avail itſelf of; what have we not to dread from it, when it can boaſt of what is univerſally acknowledged to be a far ſuperior kind of excellence?

To guard againſt this dangerous rock, ſo fatal to every genuine principle of virtue, the utmoſt humility, ſelf diffidence, and truſt in God are ever recommended to us in the holy ſcriptures. Good men are taught to regard him as the giver of every good and every perfect gift. They are repreſented as diſclaiming all the merit of their own good works, and expecting all favour and happineſs, private or public, from the free goodneſs and undeſerved mercy of God. *When we have done all that is commanded us we muſt ſay we are unprofitable ſervants, we have done* only *that which it was our duty to do.*

In the repreſentation which our Saviour has given us of the proceedings of the laſt great day of judgment, it is in this reſpect that the temper of the righteous is contraſted with that of the wicked, though that was not the principal deſign of the repreſentation. The righteous

righteous ſeem ſurpriſed at the favourable opinion which their judge expreſſes of them, and abſolutely diſclaim all the good works which he aſcribes to them. *When ſaw we thee*, ſay they, *an hungred, and fed thee; or thirſty and gave thee drink; when ſaw we thee a ſtranger and took thee in, or naked and cloathed thee; when ſaw we thee ſick and in priſon and came unto thee.* Whereas the wicked are repreſented as equally ſurpriſed at the cenſure our Lord paſſes upon them, and inſiſt upon their innocence, ſaying, *When ſaw we thee an hungred, or thirſty, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee.*

This, too, is the excellent moral conveyed to us in the parable of the Phariſee and the Publican; and the import of one of the bleſſings which our Lord pronounced in a ſolemn manner at the beginning of his miniſtry on earth, *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; and alſo the ſpirit of many of our Lord's invectives againſt the pride and hypocriſy of the ſcribes and phariſees.

No other vice ſeems capable of diſturbing the equal and generous temper of our Lord. Other vices rather excite his compaſſion, but pride together with its

uſual attendant hypocriſy, never fail to rouſe his moſt vehement indignation: inſomuch that before we attend to the heinous nature and dreadful conſequence of thoſe vices, we are apt rather to blame our Lord for intemperate wrath upon theſe occaſions, and to wonder why a perſon, who otherwiſe appears to be ſo meek, ſhould, in this caſe only, be ſo highly provoked.

How ſeverely doth he check the leaſt tendency towards pride and ambition in his own diſciples, whenever he diſcovers in any of them a diſpoſition to aſpire to diſtinction and ſuperiority; cloſing his admonition, on one remarkable occaſion, with theſe words, which are characteriſtic of the temper of his religion. Mat. xxiii. 11, 12. *He that is greateſt among you ſhall be your ſervant. Whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.*

What temper can be ſuppoſed more proper to qualify us for joining the glorious aſſembly of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, and perhaps innumerable orders of beings far ſuperior to us both in underſtanding and goodneſs, when all the ſplendour of the inviſible world ſhall be thrown open to us, but a ſpirit of the deepeſt humility, and the pureſt benevolence, which alone can diſpoſe

poſe us truly to rejoice in the view of every kind and degree of excellence wherever found, without the leaſt uneaſineſs ariſing from pride, envy, jealouſy, or diſlike; all which vicious qualities of the mind are nearly connected together. And how can a ſpirit of true humility and pure benevolence, which cannot exiſt without humility, be attained, if our regards be perpetually or frequently directed to ourſelves. Where *ſelf* is conſidered, pride, vanity, or ſelf conceit, with all their hateful conſequences, ſeem, in ſome degree, to be unavoidable.

Whoever, therefore, lays the foundation of human virtue, on the principle of ſelf intereſt, or, what is nearly the ſame thing, ſelf applauſe, is erecting a fabric which can never reſt on ſuch ſupports; and he will be found in in fact to have been pulling down with one hand what he was endeavouring to build up with the other.

To draw to a concluſion. This doctrine abounds with the nobleſt practical uſes, and points out directly the great rule of life, and ſource of happineſs; which is to give ourſelves wholly up to ſome employment, which may, if poſſible, engage all our faculties, and which tends to the good of ſociety. This is a field which is open to the exertion of all human powers,

powers, and in which all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundleſsly happy.

This will render all expedients to kill time unneceſſary. With our affections and our faculties thus engroſſed by a worthy object, we ſcarce need fear being ever dull, penſive, or melancholy, or know what it is to have our time hang heavy upon our hands. And I think I may ſo far preſume upon the known connection of mind and body, as to ſay that this is the beſt preſervative againſt hypochondriacal diſorders, to which perſons whoſe ſituation in the world doth not lead them into the active ſcenes of life are peculiarly ſubject. Every day paſſed in the ſteady and earneſt diſcharge of a man's known duty, will paſs with uniform chearfulneſs and alacrity. And in the glorious animating proſpect of a future happy ſtate of mankind, on which, in a humble truſt and confidence in the aſſiſtance and grace of God, he has ſpent all his cares, and exerted all his powers, that joy will ſpring up in his heart here, which will hereafter be *unſpeakable and full of glory*.

If troubles and perſecutions ariſe on account of our adhering to our duty; if we be oppoſed in the proſecution of laudable undertakings, or ſuffer in conſequence of undertaking them; the true piety of a perſon who habitually lives to God

God and not to himſelf, is capable of converting them all into pure unmixed joy and tranſport. Then the human mind, rouſed to the moſt intenſe exertion of all its faculties, burdened with no conſciouſneſs of guilt, referring itſelf abſolutely to the diſpoſal of its God and father, diſtruſting its own powers, and confiding in the infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, acquires a fervour of ſpirit, a courage, fortitude, and magnanimity, tempered with the moſt perfect ſerenity, and the greateſt preſence of mind, that is ſufficient, and more than ſufficient, to bear a man through every difficulty, and even to convert all pain into pleaſure. His highly agitated ſtate of mind, in thoſe trying circumſtances, is almoſt pure rapture and extaſy.

In thoſe circumſtances, which appear ſo diſtreſſing, numbers, I doubt not, have been able, according to our bleſſed Saviour's direction, to *rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing that their reward was great in heaven*; and have experienced more real comfort, peace of mind, and inward joy, in the greateſt adverſity, than they had ever felt in the days of their proſperity. Yea, what is related by hiſtorians of ſome chriſtian and proteſtant martyrs, appears to me not incredible; namely, that in the midſt of flames they have felt no pain. Their minds were ſo intenſely agitated

powers, and in which all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundleſsly happy.

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tated and wholly occupied with oppoſite ſenſations, of the moſt exalted nature, as to exclude all external ſenſation whatever, vaſtly more than we can form any idea of from the trances and reveries which any perſon was ever ſubject to.

What the extraordinary exerciſes of devotion are able to do upon extraordinary occaſions, the habitual moderate exerciſe of piety will be able to do in the ordinary courſe, and the common troubles of our lives; ſo that it may not only be compared to a ſtrong cordial, to be applied when the mind is ready to faint under adverſity, but to that food which is the daily ſupport of our lives.

To have God always in our thoughts, is not poſſible in this world. Preſent objects, to the influence of which we are continually expoſed, muſt neceſſarily engage a great part of our attention; and worldly objects, by continually engroſſing our thoughts, are apt to become of too great importance to us. We grow anxious about them, and our minds are harraſſed and fatigued with a conſtant and cloſe attention to them. Now, it is when the mind is in this ſtate, or rather tending towards it, that the benign influences of devotion are, in the ordinary courſe of our lives, the moſt ſenſibly felt; when the mind, looking off, and above all worldly

worldly objects, and deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of the infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs of God, unburdens itſelf of every anxiety, and caſts all its cares upon its heavenly father; and when the preceding tumult and diſorder in the paſſions only ſerves to augment that unſpeakable joy, ſatisfaction, and confidence, with which a deep ſenſe of the preſence and providence of God inſpires the ſoul.

The relief a benevolent mind feels from communicating its troubles and cares to an intimate friend, in whoſe wiſdom and integrity he can confide, though of the ſame nature, is but a faint image of what the truly pious ſoul feels in the delightful ſeaſons of the devout intercourſe which he maintains with his God.

This is a perpetual ſource of joy and ſatisfaction to a truly devout mind, which the wicked, thoſe perſons who live to themſelves, and not to mankind or to God, intermeddle not with. Not even an idea of that ſweet tranquility, exalted joy, and calm fortitude which true devotion inſpires can be communicated to another who hath had no experience of it himſelf. This is truly of thoſe things which St. Paul ſays *the natural man cannot comprehend, and* that *they are fooliſhneſs to him, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.*

I would

I would be no advocate for enthuſiaſm. The fervour of devotion cannot always be kept up. That is inconſiſtent with the condition of our nature, and far from being neceſſary in our preſent ſtate: but that chearful ſerenity and compoſure in which moderate acts of devotion leave the mind is an excellent temper for entering upon, and perſevering with ſpirit and alacrity in any uſeful and honourable undertaking.

The ſum of this practical doctrine, ſuggeſted by revelation, and confirmed by reaſon and obſervation is, that NO MAN CAN BE HAPPY WHO LIVES TO HIMSELF; BUT THAT TRUE HAPPINESS CONSISTS IN HAVING OUR FACULTIES WHOLLY ENGROSSED BY SOME WORTHY OBJECT, IN THE PURSUIT OF WHICH THE STRONGEST AND BEST OF OUR AFFECTIONS HAVE THEIR FULL PLAY, AND IN WHICH WE ENJOY ALL THE CONSISTENT PLEASURES OF OUR WHOLE NATURE; that though a regard to our greateſt happineſs be of excellent uſe, particularly about the beginning of our progreſs towards perfection and happineſs, in bringing our inferior appetites and paſſions into due ſubjection to the ſuperior powers of our nature, yet that ſelf-love, and a regard to ourſelves is very apt to grow too intenſe, and is in fact the cauſe of a great deal of the uſeleſs anxiety, perplexity, and miſery there is in the world;

world; and that therefore it ought to be our care, that our minds be engroſſed as much as poſſible by other objects; and that even motives to virtue which turn our attention frequently upon ourſelves ſhould be uſed with caution; for fear of feeding that vanity and ſelf-conceit which we ought to ſtudy every method of repreſſing, as the greateſt bane of true religion, being moſt oppoſite to the genuine temper of chriſtianity, and the moſt deſtructive of human happineſs.

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* I cannot make a better application of this general maxim of conduct, namely, to propoſe to ourſelves, and, in the language of Solomon *to purſue with all our might* ſome worthy object, ſome honourable and uſeful employment, eſpecially in the preſent circumſtances of things among us, than in encouraging you, my brethren in the miniſtry, to proſecute with vigour that excellent ſcheme in which you have already ſhewn ſo much laudable zeal, and have made ſo ſucceſsful a progreſs. I need not add, that I mean the ſcheme of a proviſion for the more comfortable ſupport of miniſters' widows and orphans.

This particular ſubject has the eaſieſt and happieſt connection imaginable with the general

ral one I have been diſcuſſing; as it is both a worthy and benevolent undertaking itſelf, and is deſigned for the relief of thoſe perſons who have ſhewn themſelves to be actuated by the ſame excellent ſentiments; of perſons who have not lived to themſelves, but to ſociety; who have entered into the ſocial connections of life, and who have expoſed themſelves and families to peculiar hardſhips in conſequence of thoſe honourable connections.

If any ſet of duties ſhine with peculiar luſtre and make a greater figure than the reſt in our holy religion, they are thoſe of humanity and compaſſion. Through all the books both of the Old and New Teſtament, they are the moſt frequently, and the moſt earneſtly inculcated of any particular duties: doubtleſs, becauſe they are of the ſtrongeſt obligation in themſelves, the fineſt exerciſe for our faculties (having the greateſt tendency to advance the perfection of our nature) and the beſt adapted to promote the eaſe and happineſs of mankind in general.

The Divine Being himſelf is always repreſented as taking particular notice of the treatment which the poor and diſtreſſed meet with. He hath ſtiled himſelf the *father of the fatherleſs, and the widow's God:* and therefore when we undertake thoſe humane

and

and kind offices, we may with more propriety than in any other ſphere, conſider ourſelves as acting the glorious part of God's deputies, and as ſtewards of the divine grace and goodneſs here below.

If we be obliged to contribute of our ſubſtance to the relief of the diſtreſſed, much more is it incumbent upon us not to withhold our labour and our intereſt, in the proſecution of proper ſchemes for their relief. And the method in which it is propoſed to relieve the diſtreſſed perſons we have now under conſideration is one that is quite free from all the difficulties which lie in the way of common charities (though the objections to common charities have no weight in this particular caſe) and a method which is, in all caſes, the moſt eligible, when it can be purſued with effect; namely, to put thoſe perſons whoſe circumſtances are diſtreſſing, or liable to be ſo, in the way of relieving themſelves. It is to exert our humanity in the way of encouraging, if not induſtry, at leaſt frugality.

This, conſequently, is a method which will relieve the minds of the diſtreſſed of a burthen which is often leſs tolerable than moſt kinds of calamity, namely, the ſenſe of dependence and obligation. It may be a falſe

kind of delicacy which makes ſome perſons ſo extremely ſenſible upon theſe occaſions; but it is a ſenſibility which only the moſt amiable and deſerving perſons are ſubject to; and there is certainly a peculiar propriety in attending to this circumſtance in the caſe before us.

Who are, generally, the unhappy widows whoſe caſe we are now conſidering, but perſons who have been brought up in eaſy and genteel circumſtances, and whoſe ſmall fortunes, joined to the income of their huſbands, and managed with great frugality, have been juſt ſufficient to bring up a family in that decent and reputable manner, in which a regard to their ſtation in life, and to the congregations in whoſe ſervice their huſbands were engaged, are univerſally acknowledged to require. Theſe unhappy perſons, therefore, are reduced at once, upon the death of their huſbands, and the great reduction, if not total ceaſing of their incomes (which is the immediate conſequence of that event) to one of the moſt diſtreſſing ſituations that can occur in human life.

Here is to be ſeen the deepeſt affliction for the loſs of that companion and friend for whoſe ſake they had ſacrificed perhaps better proſpects, and in ſituations in which it would have been more in their power to ſupport themſelves

ſelves and families in the like circumſtances: the greateſt indigence, to which they have never been accuſtomed, which they are therefore wholly unprepared to encounter with, and which in their time of life they are utterly incapable of remedying; and all this joined with that generoſity of ſentiment, inſpired by their education, and cheriſhed by the company and acquaintance they have always kept up, to which relief itſelf is diſtreſſing, unleſs conferred with the greateſt prudence and delicacy.

To augment the diſtreſs of theſe diſconſolate widows, they ſee nothing before them but a number of children educated in the ſame decent and frugal manner in which their parents were obliged to live, with expectations (if they be of an age capable of having any) almoſt unavoidably above their rank and fortune, wholly unprovided for, and deſtitute, in a great meaſure, of their father's intereſt and friendſhips, on which were founded all their expectations of being introduced with tolerable proſpects into the world.

Here then, my brethren, are the worthieſt objects of charity, and here is the moſt unexceptionable and deſirable method of beſtowing it; ſo that no circumſtance ſeems wanting to engage every benevolent and public ſpirited

perſon to join heartily in a ſcheme which is calculated for ſo excellent a purpoſe.

Conſider, my brethren, how many worthy perſons are anxious about the prudence and the vigour of your preſent reſolutions; with what tender and heart-piercing concern the worthy and pious parent regards the wife of his boſom and the children of his love, when he feels the ſymptoms of his own declining nature, and dreads to communicate the alarming intelligence; and how earneſtly he wiſhes it may be in his power to do ſomething, while living, which, when he is dead, may be the means of providing a ſmall ſubſtitute for the fruit of his preſent labours; when alas, no ſubſtitute can be provided for himſelf, for his advice, his inſtructions, his conſolations, the charms of his converſation, and all his perſonal kind offices. Of what a load of anxiety and diſtreſs, which tends to haſten the dreaded even, would this ſcheme eaſe the worthieſt and moſt conſiderate of human minds.

Conſider alſo, how many perſons, the beſt qualified to bear their parts with propriety and honour in ſocial life, and to exhibit the fineſt example of the ſeveral relative and domeſtic duties to others, and who are thereby capable of having their own uſefulneſs greatly extend-

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ed, are reſtrained from engaging in ſocial connections by that peculiar tenderneſs and humanity, which a liberal education, and a life devoted to the ſervice of a benevolent religion inſpires; and alſo by that very prudence, which would eminently contribute to their fulfilling the moſt important duties of it in the moſt exemplary manner.

So excellent an undertaking, will doubtleſs be its own ſufficient reward; and if *the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, what good may you not reaſonably expect that the devout bleſſings and fervent prayers of the many excellent perſons intereſted in your preſent reſolutions will procure you, from that God *who is able to make all grace abound towards you, and to ſupply all your wants, out of his abundant fulneſs in* Chriſt Jeſus.

Let *us* then, my brethren, *be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable* in this, as well as *always abounding in every good work; for as much as we know that our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.*

FINIS.

A

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